Eight Principles to Connect Preservice Educators to Urban Schools and Classrooms

Angela Rhone, Florida Atlantic University
Lori Dassa, Florida Atlantic University
Vanessa Hotchkiss, Florida Atlantic University

Abstract

This article examines eight principles that can help preservice teachers make the connection between the Introduction to Educational Psychology class and working with the special needs of urban students. Based on research in educational psychology and its importance to preservice teachers, it is essential that professors who teach this discipline realize that successful and good practices for preservice teachers are based on (a) teaching educational psychology from a historical perspective, (b) developing a community of learning, (c) teaching issues of race, class, gender, and immigration, (d) being aware of students' móres, culture norms, and traditions, (e) making a connection to theorists with how to teach and who to teach, (f) teaching the importance of development in knowledge, curriculum, and levels of understanding, (g) teaching the significance of proper feedback, and h) developing critical thinking skills. This paper is based on the perceptions of one of the authors on how to merge educational psychology theories with successful teaching practices within the urban classroom to work with the special needs of the diverse children.

Introduction

Educational psychology theorists have argued that many preservice teachers have not been fully prepared by their professors in colleges of education to work in urban settings (Haberman & Post, 2009; Sachs, 2004). Society has debated as to whether or not the ideologies of educational psychology with a focus on urban education as a discipline actually contribute to effective teacher training (Patrick, Anderman, Bruening, & Duffin, 2011). These two perspectives have led to controversy in the teacher preparation programs. The arguments have led to a clear disconnect. The theories and their impact on classroom activities are not effectively addressed in preservice education classes, and preservice teachers see no connection between what is taught in the theoretical courses and what they experience in their field classrooms (Haberman & Post, 2009; Sachs, 2004).

The connection between what the educational psychologists know and what these theorists link to curriculum, behavior, and culture in urban settings are a necessity for preservice teachers. For the purpose of this paper, these identified characteristics can be defined as the special needs that must be addressed when working with these diverse students. This paper is twofold: (a) to review the work of several educational psychologists in the context of their theories and their importance to preservice teachers as they work with the special needs of urban students, and (b) to provide professors who teach introduction to educational psychology courses with suggestions for successful preservice teachers working in the urban field. It is hoped that the insights provided in this paper will help preservice teachers in educational settings to learn, see, and to apply the ideas behind the educational psychology theories to the urban classroom. In order to accomplish the objectives, the paper will focus on (a) the need for a clear understanding of educational psychology theorists who have set the framework and the foundation for preservice teachers and how their students should be taught, (b) the background of 21st century urban settings in which preservice teachers are working, and (c) how the merger of theory and pedagogy can come together authentically in this urban setting to aid in the success of future preservice teachers.

Theoretical Framework That Supports the Merger

Researchers such as Burbank, Ramirez, and Bates (2012) believed that educational psychology is a waste of time in teacher preparation programs, and educational psychologists feel that their pedagogy is not being carried forward into the methods and the coursework for students to use accurately in a variety of demographic systems (Burbank et al., 2012). Perhaps if there were a shift in educational psychology theoretical discussions and how they pertain to the diverse 21st century classroom, both theorists and the public would reconsider their positions about educational psychology.

The infusion and diversity recently have become embedded in the policy and leadership of current teacher preparation programs. Many of these programs are held to new accrediting standards required by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2015). The first standard requirements include the following language: "Providers ensure that candidates use research and evidence to develop an understanding of the teaching profession and use both to measure their P-12 students' progress and their own professional practice" (CAEP, 2015, p. 15). These P-12 students have been specifically defined as "children or youth attending P-12 school including, but not limited to, students with disabilities or exceptionalities, students who are gifted, and students who represent diversity based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, religion, sexual identification, and/or geographic origin" (CAEP, 2015), p. 2).

The authors argue that not only multicultural education studies are needed but also preservice students need to have a strong theoretical and praxis background of the theorists who shaped educational psychology in order to meet these standards. Coupled with this need is the need for relevant teaching of the major theorists in educational psychology and their connection to how their work will provide a successful framework from which preservice teachers can draw their references. Comber and Simpson (2001) stated that "student success in school hinges in part on the teacher's views of children's language, race, gender, and socioeconomic status" (p. 1). If teachers assume deficiencies from students' cultures and languages, they often attempt to fix students because they see them as problems and focus on that goal rather than on the curriculum, society, or school policies that can lead to success in schools (Burbank et al., 2012).

This philosophy of seeing students' language and culture as inadequate deflates the public argument and reinforces the need for preservice teachers to have solid knowledge of the framework of educational theorists from which many teach. It is time to merge what knowledge preservice teachers should have about Bronfenbrenner (1979), Clark and Clark (1939), Dewey (1956), Erikson (1950), Kohlberg (1968), Piaget (1954), and Vygotsky (1978) with how children learn, adapt, and cope with transitions in the urban environment.

Literature Review on Educational Psychologists

According to Santrock (2011), educational psychology is "the branch of psychology that specializes in understanding teaching and learning in educational settings" (p. 2). Zambo (2007) argued that "courses in educational psychology are the backbone of teacher education, a view that educators have recognized for a long time" (p. 1). Zambo (2007) also stated, "In 1912, William James proclaimed that psychology and pedagogy were unquestionably intertwined and equally important foundations of effective practice" (p. 1). The implication was that teacher education courses should have a strong foundation in educational psychology combined with effective field experience. Educational psychology can be further explained as a discipline that concentrates on human learning and human development, as it relates to instructional practices (Ormrod, 2012). Although there are several educational psychology theorists whose work is very important to the teaching of educational psychology, the authors have chosen to focus on seven theorists as they relate to the successful teaching of preservice teachers in urban settings.

When discussing founding educational psychologists, 20th century educator Dewey (1956) must be addressed, especially for his great international following on his reforms in child education. Dewey's ideologies can be directly linked to the urban environment because the indication for educational reform did not come from any abstract thoughts or ideas. The ideologies were derived from the realities of the industrial revolution and the influx of individuals and immigrants seeking employment who descended upon the urban areas. Their new situation forced both parents and children to seek ways of satisfying the new demands thrust upon them. The child brought up in a housing project or an apartment in crowded city streets has significantly different needs

and faces more complex and complicated problems than the child brought up on a family farm. The families who migrated from foreign countries to American cities since the end of World War II can attest to this (Samuel & Suh, 2012).

Dewey (1956) laid out several worthwhile reforms as to the purpose of education during World War II. He established that schools would be freely available to all from kindergarten to college. Dewey also believed that education should give every child the chance to grow up spontaneously, harmoniously. Each stage of child development has its own dominant needs, problems, modes of behavior, and reasoning. These special traits require their own methods of teaching and learning which have to provide the basis for the educational curriculum. More important, the child learns best through direct personal experience (Dewey, 1956).

Known for his advocacy of democracy, Dewey (1956) considered two fundamental elements, schools and civil society. Each of these reforms he established and believed in. Dewey is considered the father of the progressive education movement. He continually argued that education and learning are social and interactive processes. Thus, Dewey explained, the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can, and should, take place. In addition, Dewey believed that students thrived in an environment where they were allowed to experience and to interact with the curriculum. Furthermore, he maintained that all students should have the opportunity to take part in their own learning. Dewey believed that individuals learned through their own interactions with their environment.

Students taking part in their own learning were particularly important when a classroom was filled with diverse children, whether it be social economic or cultural status. With this in mind, urban preservice teachers can create a curriculum that needs to be written and focused toward the environment and the experience in which their students live in order for complete assimilation and accommodation to take place (Samuel & Suh, 2012).

Vygotsky's (1978) theory, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), occurs when new skills can be mastered if they fall within the child's zone. Horsch, Chen, and Wagner (2002) explained this by further identifying that there are "external and internal factors that make up the context for implementation" (p. 383). If educators do not identify these factors when targeting a child's ZPD, then the expectation of change will be partial (Santrock, 2011). In the urban environment, the external factors, such as family life, socioeconomic status, and stressors outside the classroom, need to be taken into consideration before academics can be introduced. Teachers in these urban schools need to establish safe environments that eliminate these external factors within the classroom walls before they can anticipate any learning to occur.

Piaget (1954) stressed the contributions of culture, social interaction, and the historical dimension of mental development. On the other hand, he was more interested in the biological and structural side of child development. A preservice teacher who understands his or her belief system, plus Piaget's (1954) four stages of cognitive development, sensiomotor development, preoperational development, formal operational development, and concrete operational development, will bring knowledge as to how students learn, materials to bring to each stage, learning disabilities, parent and teacher social interaction, and how children develop mentally. Additionally, because Piaget's theory (1954) of cognitive development proposed that humans should not be given information which they immediately understand and use, he proposed the idea that humans should be given the opportunity to construct their own knowledge (Piaget, 1954). Preservice education teachers who are placed in urban areas should both recognize and celebrate the knowledge each child brings to the table.

Piaget (1954) also viewed social interaction as one of the primary factors in cognitive development. In other words, Piaget (1954) believed that how children interacted with others would influence how they grew mentally. These interactions are unique in the urban environment because they involve trust and safety. The students have to trust that the negative external influences are not going to impact them when engaging with their teachers or peers. The school environment needs to be a place where they feel safe to make mistakes and to cognitively grow without consequences that may mirror their difficult home lives (Woolfolk, 2010).

Kohlberg (1968), another educational psychologist, began his theory with the assumption that humans are intrinsically motivated to explore and to become competent at functioning in their environments. In social development, people are led to imitate role models perceived as competent and to look to them for validation (Kohlberg, 1968). With this in mind,

preservice teachers occupy a very important role in an urban classroom. Students not only depend on the preservice teachers for issues of right or wrong but also parents look toward them for an understanding of society. For instance, the lack of resources in urban schools and ethical principles both inside and outside the classroom should be of concern to preservice teachers. Santrock (2011) proposed, "First, it is important to establish a community of mutual respect and warmth with a fair and consistent application of the rules. Without that kind of community, all of your attempts to create a moral climate will be undermined" (p. 101).

Erikson (1950) and his specific psychosocial theory emphasized "the emergence of self, the search for identity, the individual's relationship with others, and the role of culture throughout life" (p. 75). Erikson saw development as stages which were interdependent upon each other. Furthermore, preservice teachers who were given the opportunity to teach in urban areas could help students to grow and to develop along Erikson's developmental guidelines, according to his theory. Stages 3 and 4 of Erikson's theory, which represented initiative versus guilt and industry versus inferiority, respectively, represented the standard for children between the ages of 3 through 12. Preservice teachers who have learned this theory could apply the developmental milestones into their lesson plans and curriculum. Due to the financial and environmental disadvantages experienced by urban families, many children come into the classroom developmentally lagging, as per Erikson's stages. Therefore, using Erikson as a steppingstone for knowledge could increase the learning of preservice teachers and students.

Clark and Clark's (1939) impact on urban education cannot be emphasized enough for preservice teachers. According to the historical background of Clark and Clark's theory, which was referred to as the doll experiment, separate but equal schools were harmful to both Black and White children. They conducted research showing African American children's self-conceptions and identity (Clark & Clark, 1939). They argued that segregation was harmful to both Black and White students. In many urban settings, preservice teachers and children alike come together with different beliefs about each other.

It is important that preservice teachers have a solid foundation in Clark and Clark's work. Their contributions to the beliefs of African American children's upbringing demonstrate successful and unsuccessful events in the classroom and in society. Preservice teachers should understand Clark and Clark's philosophy of the Black child's concept of internalized racism that many may bring to the classroom. According to Clark and Clark's internalized racism theory, Black children buy into their oppression due to what they perceive as depicted as good or bad in society.

Clark and Clark (1939) were very specific with their internalized racism theory compared with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, who provided a broad view of how to look at the socioemotional development of children through the ecological, multisystem model. Bronfenbrenner argued that development was very much a part of the environment through the ecological model he created. One can assume that preservice teachers are given the opportunity to actually embrace and to study Bronfenbrenner's theory as a part of their educational knowledge. They can prepare and execute their curriculum to coincide with a good teacher-parent relationship. Preservice teachers must understand the relationships (systems) in the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner maintained that children grow up as members of specific ethnic, religious, and economic communities, and are mirrored by their neighborhoods and schools. These contexts impact social and cognitive growth, which become the building blocks of growth, learning, and development. In effect, then, it is Bronfenbrenner's theory, combined with curriculum, which enhances the urban students' lives that should be the framework of success.

Background of 21st Century Urban Settings

Many preservice teachers, especially those who are coming from a social class environment that does not resemble or favor that of the urban classroom may find it very difficult to cope and to teach in urban areas. Chester and Beaudin (1996) contended that teaching in an urban environment may seem daunting and that a greater understanding can come with knowing some of the characteristics that urban students have which rural or suburban students may not share. These characteristics may be unfamiliar to the first-time urban teacher. Preservice teachers should not look at these characteristics as obstacles to overcome, but should be understood before they enter the urban classroom (Chester & Beaudin, 1996).

Additionally, the changing demographics of the 21st century have created a shift in terms of the diversity in immigrants who are coming to America. Many of these immigrants (people of color) and the change in the economic living conditions of many residents have put more people in urban settings compared with the past 30 years. The implication here is that the knowledge of demographics and ethnicity should be recognized when preservice teachers are being prepared to teach in urban environments. Many immigrants often settle into urban areas due to less expensive housing, accessibility to mass transit, possible unskilled employment opportunities, and social marginalization, self or societally imposed. In the 21st century, urban students are more likely to be of diverse Hispanic backgrounds or nationalities associated with darker skin color (Kopetz, Lease, & Warren-Kring, 2006).

The likelihood of language barriers or concerns also occurs more often in urban households. If this is the case, many of these students will fall further behind in reading, and their vocabularies will be diminished compared with those of students where there are no household language barriers and where education is paramount. The language situation is often coupled with the strong probability that either the parents or the primary caregiver did not graduate from high school, much less college. In many cases, these factors contribute to the urban student not graduating from high school as well, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty (Kopetz et al., 2006).

Kopetz et al. (2006) maintained that the fabric of society in the United States has undergone significant changes following the first 200 years since its birth as a nation when Western European heritage and English-speaking majority populations were dominant. Poverty, as in rural communities, is quite prevalent in urban settings. Many urban students are born poor and often remain so throughout the education process. Food stamps and other social welfare programs aid in providing what nutrition is received in the home. In many cases, subsidized lunches are often the only balanced meal many urban students receive daily. This lack of food often leads to health issues and high absenteeism. These health concerns cannot be addressed due to their parents or caregivers having little or no health insurance (Kopetz et al., 2006)

High absenteeism coupled with language obstacles can, and often do, lead to urban students falling considerably behind their fellow students in their classwork. Many of these students will find it necessary to repeat grades. Students never catch up, even though they have repeated the grade. It is believed that less-than-adequate living conditions, lack of attention from home, and scarce community support critically affect students' attitudes, behaviors, and potential to progress academically and into secure employment (Kopetz et al., 2006).

How to Create This Merger

The worldviews of the urban students and the teachers who instruct them often greatly differ. Teachers occasionally enter the urban educational setting with an agenda. A save the world syndrome may fuel the desire to help the underprivileged. This is based on the notion that inner-city students deserve a quality education. Who better to deliver that than an enlightened teacher from a nurturing and educated environment? However, preservice teachers are often unaware of the difficulties they may encounter being new to the urban classroom (Stairs, 2010).

As a fundamental understanding of the educational psychology theories is imperative to the success of preservice teachers, it is the role of the educational psychology professor to re-bridge the gap between theory and action. Many preservice teachers end up leaving the field early. Ingersoll (2001) conducted a longitudinal study, reporting that over 41% of new teachers will leave the field within the first five years. By closing this gap, preservice teachers will understand that theorists' work lays the foundation for how they will teach and function in their classrooms, helping for them to feel more prepared. This paper proposes eight principles in which educational psychology professors can connect educational psychology theory and practice for preservice teachers to prepare them to teach in an urban setting. Principles of learning, according to Ormrod (2012), identify certain factors that influence learning.

Principle 1: Teaching Through a Historical Perspective

Preservice teachers must understand from a historical perspective the diversity of the framework of the founders of educational psychology. More importantly, there is a need for preservice teachers to understand how history shaped the ideology of the theorists whom they are studying. Preservice teachers should enter their teaching profession with a strong

sense of sociopolitical history in America and a sense of how to impart justice, equality, and fairness through innovative curriculum to their students. The idea of looking at their classroom through a diverse perspective and with different lenses should afford the new preservice teachers with the tools they need to foster critical thinking and higher personal goals for their students. It is important that this knowledge is introduced to preservice teachers by their professors before they enter the classrooms in educational psychology courses. Understanding theories of learning, motivation, and child development and their applicability can "help teachers make sound instructional decisions that lead to achievement of the standards for learning set forth by states and districts in response to the No Child Left Behind Act" (Zambo, 2007, p.1).

Dewey (1956) argued for the importance of meaningful projects in learning. Following Dewey's instructions on the importance of learning by doing, professors can place preservice teachers in groups at the start of the semester to examine the historical background of each theorist and to answer questions. Students enhance their discussions by applying their research on the historical background of educational psychology theorists to American society. More importantly, students can discuss the importance to themselves as preservice teachers. As different theorists are researched every 2 weeks, preservice teachers take part in constructivist learning. Having preservice teachers study the conditions on which the theories were created and the social implications, preservice teachers will be able to make connections when they teach. The ultimate importance of this exercise is to have the preservice teachers make the correlation with the work of educational theorists and their own teaching practices.

Principle 2: Developing a Community of Learning

What plagues urban students and their families on a personal level can be mirrored in urban schools. Resources are scarce and, in some cases, nonexistent. Even in suburban settings, teachers frequently have out-of-pocket expenses to provide daily essentials for their students. In an urban setting, this may mean basic everyday classroom necessities (Kopetz et al., 2006). Overcrowded living conditions may transfer to overcrowded classrooms. This not only leads to tension in the household that is internalized and brought to school, but is further exacerbated by the tension which can exist in an overcrowded classroom. If the instructor is unprepared to meet this challenge, it can cause friction between the student and the teacher, the teacher and the caregivers, and can compound the already prevailing angst between caregivers and students. School administrators rely on the teacher to recognize and to defuse issues such as these (Kopetz et al., 2006). In an attempt to address the development of a community of learners, educational psychology professors can use Dewey's (1956) theory of hands-on learning when educating preservice teachers.

Dewey (1956) focused on educative experiences in the classroom. He felt that academic materials could be transferred to students if they were provided instruction that was appealing and for educative purposes. This instruction lies in the hands-on, real-world experiences that students can have within the classroom. Dewey also felt that there needed to be connections to this material, especially between the prior experiences of the children and those developed by their educators. As discussed, this can be more challenging in the urban environment because the children do not come to the classroom with an abundance of prior academic experiences and background knowledge. The teacher needs to create these experiences for the children before this transference through educative experiences can begin. The obvious way to accomplish this is through field trips. Unfortunately, resources and funding are not always available for students to attend a variety of trips. Therefore, the teacher must bring the field trip to the classroom. This can be accomplished in two ways: demonstrations and virtual interaction. The teacher can bring real-world materials into his or her classroom for the students to experience and to manipulate, even for the first time. The alternative is to offer the students virtual field trips through a variety of website and technology simulations. Both offer the children engagement and experiences that lead to critical thinking and the learning process.

A difficult component of these encounters, however, initially may be engaging these students in these learning opportunities. There needs to be a connection and a purpose that is focused on the students' needs and interests with an underlying teacher purpose. This does not mean that the classroom becomes completely child-centered and depleted of an academic focus. This follows Dewey's (1956) philosophy that child-centered pedagogy should not be construed as completely free of content matter. It is the role of the educator to build that important subject matter into the educative experiences, by designing powerful

classroom learning experiences. The students are therefore engaged in the learning process and are gaining essential knowledge of the discipline they are studying. In other words, there needs to be buy-in from the students in order for academic progress to occur.

Vygotsky (1978) also spoke of the need for shared positive interaction between teacher and student. Through scaffolding there needs to be a relationship built through the teacher and student, creating a positive connection. Smagorinsky (2013) offered an excellent example of these connections. He explained that if a student comes to school and is constantly corrected on the use of poor English, then he or she will begin to link speaking English with feelings of shame and embarrassment. This student then shuts down academically when any English speaking is required, causing a deficiency in cognitive levels. This can then be interpreted by others as a lack of intelligence. Inevitably, this behavior will cause the students' peers to treat them differently. It is up to the preservice teachers in urban settings to be able to manifest these positive activities and not to be fearful and threatened by the initial negative behavior of these students. A new preservice teacher who has this kind of knowledge as a basis for his or her teaching experience will be an asset in an urban environment. It can be argued that preservice teachers whose educational backgrounds are centered on the teachings of educational psychologists are more prepared with clearer insights as to how to tie in the knowledge about the theorists and his or her relationships to urban settings. These teachers produce effective classrooms, successful students, and have a better relationship with parents and the community. They are better able "to understand the complexity of educational issues and recognize that no one single curriculum or new theory has the answer for all their students' needs" (Zambo, 2007, p.1).

According to Smagorinsky (2013), the second-language learner cannot thrive in a negative environment because he or she feels shame, embarrassment, and has been categorized by his or her peers and teachers as inferior in the cognitive arena. His or her social interactions are clearly negative and, therefore, so is his or her cognitive development. It is essential that the preservice teacher who is placed in this environment and who brings Piaget's (1954) theory to the top of his or her study should break these barriers and infuse the stage of learning, the culture, and the variety of language into the urban classroom. This goes beyond having a designated month for different nationalities but, rather, including the culture of the students into the classroom on a daily basis. One way to accomplish this is through language swapping, an approach one of the authors used in the classroom. Each week the students learned key phrases from another language spoken in the classroom, such as "How are you?" or "Sit down please." The English speakers used the new language for those phrases every time they needed to, and the second-language learners used the English translation when it was their time to speak. Now there is a transfer of languages between the students, breaking down the feeling of shame and embarrassment. The English speakers will struggle with the new language as much as the second-language learner does with English. Now the teacher has created an environment of positive social interactions supported by Piaget (2000), which enhances cognitive development.

According to Kohlberg (1968), moral development primarily involves more reasoning, and it occurs in stages. Preservice teachers in an urban environment will need to put away their basic assumptions about what urban means to them. Curriculum in any learning environment should be filled with mutual respect and caring for one another. If the preservice teacher does not learn how to create and maintain a class culture of respect and a safe environment, he or she will not be able to educate the children. There needs to be an established sense of ownership for the classroom, regardless of what occurs. The children need to be able to trust the stability of their teacher and will not do so if they believe that every behavior issue or poor academic performance will make him or her leave the classroom.

Principle 3: Teaching Issues of Race, Class, Gender, and Immigration

Individuals are shaped by their environment (race, class, and gender), exclusion, and violence. Through immigration policies and segregation laws, the diversity of populations is spaced out, having an effect within the demographics in the classroom. Advocates of multicultural education argued that the only way to effectively prepare teachers to teach across in different environments was to expose them to a curriculum that focused on the history of race and class oppression in the United States and that forced the students to recognize and to unlearn their biases. Lee (1995), from Brooklyn, argued that "such an approach is essential because it provides teachers, students and parents with

the tools needed to combat racism and ethnic discrimination and to find ways to build a society that includes all people on equal footing" (p.8).

It is important for students to understand that the framers, or the creators of educational psychology, were not only White males (like educational psychologists Dewey, Thorndike, and James) but also were minorities whose work in educational psychology was very relevant to the discipline, however were under recognized (Santrock, 2011). For example, the recognition of Clark and Clark, two African American educational psychologists, is given two lines in the Santrock (2011) text. The same goes for Sanchez and Hollingworth (Santrock, 2011). Individuals who are kept out of mainstream literature leave students with an assumption that the discipline was only founded by white males. Hence, their work, the significance of their studies, and the relevance of their work to present day are not being adequately taught to preservice teachers (Santrock, 2011).

Professors who prepare student teachers to teach in a diverse classroom should be aware of historical educational psychology leaders who were not White males, thereby preparing their preservice teachers with important knowledge, concepts, and a body of work that has been generated and applicable to their presence in the classroom. Professors who subtly convey to preservice students that minority contributions to educational psychology are minimal can lead to preservice teachers thinking that minority researchers' work is not relevant to their field of study. Moreover, if professors in education prepare student teachers to teach in diverse communities, yet the student teachers have no connection to the theoretical work of these psychologists, the professors are setting up preservice teachers for failure. A lack of knowledge of the ideology of minority theorists, and their relevance to their location, prompt many to walk away from the profession after a few years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001).

Many preservice teachers begin to look at issues of race, class, and gender in the context of educational psychology (Santrock, 2011). Educational psychology theorists can help with many race, class, and gender issues in the classroom. How does one deal with gifted students in the classroom? How do preservice teachers accommodate gifted students if they have no frame of reference? Hollingworth's (1926) work is worthwhile for the authors' students to understand the curriculum for gifted students and their environment. Clark and Clark (1939) encourages preservice teachers to question, how do I, as a preservice teacher, begin to understand "internalized racism" and, at the same time, incorporate these issues of gender and race for students? How do I teach inclusiveness, social justice, and multicultural education from the works of these individuals? Sanchez (1951) helps preservice teachers question, if I have Hispanic students who are monolingual, how do I prepare them for the state tests? How do I prepare them to accommodate/assimilate and function in society?

Principle 4: Being Aware of Students' Móres, Cultural Norms, and Traditions

Another such concern is unfamiliarity with student cultural norms, móres, and traditions for which teachers new to urban schools are ill-prepared. With such a diverse racial and ethnic convergence present in the classroom, urban teachers need much more than a working knowledge of each ethnic group or race in order to be understanding of each of their students' needs concerning these issues. Teachers will need to incorporate cultural compatible communication patterns into their teaching repertoires while not losing sight of what learning needs are necessary for students to successfully move forward in the education system (Kopetz et al., 2006). In order to do this, professors can encourage preservice teachers to begin to connect the lessons taught within educational psychology with their other classes, such as multicultural education, educational history, and TESOL education. Within the last 2 weeks of their own lessons, students are in a diverse preschool or elementary school in order to tie in theory and practice. Within essay form, preservice teachers are to write an essay on the diversity of the classroom, through the lens of multicultural education, socioeconomic status, and disabilities. Most importantly, preservice teachers must be able to express their understanding of connections associated with race, class, and gender with educational psychology theories.

Principle 5: Making a Connection to Theorists with How to Teach and Who to Teach

Students must understand and must make the connections from the theorists' work to the way they create their lesson plans, how they teach, and who they teach. This can be accomplished by marrying subject knowledge with cultural knowledge to bridge the gap between developmental stagnation and learning liabilities. The current teacher education programs are

preparing students for a classroom environment that no longer exists, particularly in the urban setting (Kopetz et al., 2006).

Teacher preparation programs all consist of strong educational pedagogy and theory. It is essential that with the new diversified classrooms, these programs are tweaked so that teacher candidates become graduates capable of teaching in these differing environments. This is impossible if the topics that are taught are not properly connected across the placements. Teacher candidates should be required to take the theory and the pedagogy through their assignments and apply them into the varied classrooms. This can be accomplished through fieldwork or practicum hours as long as they are placed in varying socioeconomic schools.

Teachers in these types of classrooms also need to be able to observe and to identify the skills that are lacking. Instead of getting frustrated, they should incorporate the skills that are lacking into their curriculum. Teachers and preservice teachers need to be flexible. In this stage, preservice teachers must help students in urban areas to make the transition from pre-elementary to their now elementary schools so that they may develop lifetime skills of perseverance, responsibility, and a skill set to help them carve out a sense of their identity. "In the transition to middle school, students confront an increased focus on grades and performance as well as competition on all fronts—academic, social and athletic" (Woolfolk, 2010, p. 78). This task might seem daunting for the preservice teacher to accomplish; however, being grounded in Erikson's (1950) theory will facilitate a smoother experience for both the preservice teacher and the student.

Principle 6: Teaching the Importance of Development in Knowledge, Curriculum, and Levels of Understanding

Students and teachers need to understand that development is important to the knowledge, curriculum, and levels of their students' learning. Preservice teachers need to be cautious of misconceptions when creating this curriculum. For example, one common assumption is that students in the urban environment lack prior knowledge and experiences. This may have some truth, but they do have experiences and knowledge that need to be encouraged and shared in the classroom. Preservice teachers need to eliminate these assumptions and to build on students' knowledge rather than to dismiss it. They need to create lessons that include the experiences these students do have and connect them to the new knowledge so that cognitive bridges begin to be built.

Preservice teachers also need to be aware of their students as children before they can design curriculum. There are often external factors that impact the students and how they learn. These external factors relate to Vygotsky's (1978) discussion of the home and school connections. Accordingly, Vygotsky's (1978) learning is done in a social setting. In other words, if there are problems students experience at home, they can be transferred into the experiences in the everyday classroom. "Dramatic tensions are also present within the individual, suggesting that the development of personality is a consequence of the personal and social dramatic conflicts a person experiences in everyday life" (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195). Educators who teach in the urban environment must be aware of the life that surrounds their students in order to authentically block these stressors from entering their classrooms. It could be something as simple as having the students privately write down on a piece of paper the stressors that they are experiencing at home on a piece of paper and leave the paper in a box outside the classroom door. This dramatic physical action demonstrates that these issues cannot enter a safe classroom environment and impact their learning. "From a Vygotskian perspective, emotions are inseparable from thinking" (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 194). The external stressors that some children from urban settings undergo can impact their thinking. If they are stressing over socioeconomics and instability in their home lives, they will struggle with thinking in the classroom, leading to poor performance. "How we think and how we feel cannot be separated" (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195).

Principle 7: Teaching the Significance of Proper Feedback

Preservice teachers need to understand that immediate feedback and relevant feedback are the basis for student success. According to Bandura (1977), when feedback highlights positive accomplishments, rather than negative remarks, the self-confidence of students and analytical thinking are enhanced. The author recommends frequently asking questions during class, acting as a recap for the lesson that is being taught. An example of what can be done, is to periodically stop the lesson and ask students to summarize what has

been taught, particularly students whom seem lost, helping guide students attention back to where it should be (Lambert, Cartledge, Heward and Lo, 2006; Munro and Stephenson, 2009). An activity that the author encourages her preservice teachers to do is to write an analytical paper. Feedback is provided in a timely manner. The feedback is based on grammar, critical thinking, and the purpose of writing the essay. Suggestions for quality papers are given. Students are allowed to turn in papers following their suggestions for a second reading. By taking time to speak with each student on an individual basis provides each student with a greater understanding of the goals of educational psychology in terms of lesson plan writing, seeing their connection to the theorists, and seeing the theorists' connection to their future careers.

Principle 8: Developing Critical Thinking Skills

"Critical thinking is a socio-cultural practice, not a discrete skill. To think critically is to engage in dialogue, to argue, to agree, to test limits, and to stretch boundaries" (Lyutykh, 2009, p. 384). The author engages students in dialogue through group presentations, reading from the text, centering questions in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy from rope memorization to critical thinking. Most importantly, the author allows the preservice teachers to teach a chapter within their own educational psychology class. The preservice teachers are able to make a deeper connection through teaching their lessons in preparation for urban environments as they critically engage within lesson preparation and other preservice teachers engage through critical thinking questions. Preservice teachers are encouraged to use several sources for presentation, as "students who learned with multiple texts instead of traditional textbooks actually learned more history content" (Woolfolk, 2010, p. 294). In order to help preservice teachers think on a deeper level, the author has them connect text with other technological devices in order for them to view the material in new ways:

Critical thinking is at the heart of effective reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It enables us to link together mastery of content with such diverse goals as self-esteem, self-discipline, multicultural education, effective cooperative learning, and problem solving. It enables all instructors and administrators to raise the level of their own teaching and thinking" (Woolfolk, 2010, p. 293).

Methodology

As a professor who teaches undergraduate courses in educational psychology, one of the authors has used theory and praxis in order for students to connect what they learn in class to practical application. Many of these students who take the class are early childhood, elementary, and high school preservice teachers; most have registered at the university during their junior year. Through the entire semester, the students do PowerPoint presentations on several educational psychology theorists whose work and philosophies have shaped teaching and learning. For example, in studying Piaget's (1954) stages of cognitive development in a group study situation, the students are provided with scenarios and through critical thinking and discussion, they develop a classroom setting, curriculum, and parent-to-parent conferences for each stage. They also look at what learning accommodations are needed to fit each scenario depending on the developmental stage of the child according to Piaget (1954). Each educational psychology theorist is treated in the same fashion. Therefore, throughout the semester, the students would do approximately 15 different scenarios. Six weeks before the semester is over, each student must visit an urban classroom and observe for an hour or more the setting of the school, the teachers of the school, the diversity of the classroom, and, more importantly, present an in-depth written observation of what they observed in the classroom. Copious notes must be taken by the students regarding the classroom setting, teachers' curriculum, and observable childhood development of the children. The preservice teachers then proceed to write a paper on their observations and correlate their findings by putting what they observed in the context of at least five educational psychological theories. The connection of both weeks of learning about the theorists and the writing of their critical analyses of the observation must be done in the context of the theorists who were discussed in their learning through the semester.

Teacher preparation programs can help by increasing the field placement component within the urban setting. This field placement cannot be "a standalone requirement, but structured around those key education courses, providing them with the preparation needed to succeed in urban contexts" (Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2007, p. 271). Preservice teachers need a balance between the educational psychology theories that exist and how these theories are deliberately connected to the urban classrooms they are entering. One of the most

interesting themes that emerged was from Mason's (1999) study of preservice students during an 8-week urban placement before student teaching was the positive connections the students gained when the field and the university were interconnected.

Conclusions

By connecting their knowledge of educational psychology, pedagogy, and culture in the appropriate settings, the barriers between stereotypical preservice candidates and the preconceived notions of the urban environment begin to break down. The best way to accomplish this is through positive experiences. "We must help preservice teachers to see these diversities not just as problems but as assets" (Hampton et al., 2007, p. 87). When the negative stereotypes about the urban environment are removed, preservice teachers are able to see the positive impact they can make. "The quality of the interaction that takes place in the field experience can influence the commitment of these teachers to urban schools after graduation" (Olmedo, 1997, p. 245). These preservice students alter their perspectives and realize they want to stay in the urban environment to truly impact the lives of their students. If the next level can occur, preservice teachers will begin to realize that the educational theories they have learned in the college classroom can be applied in the field. They will be able to see firsthand how to set up lesson plans, how to deal with behavioral issues and, more important, create positive relationships with their students all through the connection of the educational psychology theorists they have studied.

Future Implications

The authors have had extensive student forums and discussions about the need for educational psychology as it relates to teacher preparation. Many students valued the course but felt there were no real connections between their educational psychology course and the practical application to their student-teacher experience. Many felt that this course was often taken too early in the program and that by the time they were in practicum and fieldwork settings, they had trouble recalling, connecting, and applying what they had previously learned to what they were experiencing as a preservice teacher. This is also being identified on professional state exams these students are taking. Passing scores are at 60%, with many students struggling with the theorists and practical connections.

With the knowledge of accreditation standards in place for teacher preparation programs, the authors are aware for the need to merge these courses in order to properly prepare their preserve students to work with their special and diverse students in the 21st century classroom. The authors believe that the placement of this course in the program needs to be altered, and the relationship between the course and the practicum course need to be developed. Furthermore, the authors are educational psychologists and practicum professors who are eager to work together to develop this course and to create these deficient connections.

School leaders and administration should expose these principles to preservice teachers who are new to the urban environment and may perceive the needs of this specialized group of students as too difficult. Before these principles are attempted with preservice teachers, professors involved in practicum courses should review and make suggestions with regard to the demographics and diversity of the school in which their preservice teachers are placed.

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